

THE REPUBLICAN REVERSAL

Research Documents

Primary Sources

1996 Republican Party Platform

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A Cleaner, Safer, Healthier America

"Those of us who grew up in rural America grew up with a common set of values, a code of living that stays with us all our lives. Love of God and country and family. Commitment to honesty, decency and personal responsibility. Self-reliance tempered by a sense of community.... Those values made us the greatest country on earth. And the secret to getting our country back on track is simply to return to them as a matter of national policy." Bob Dole, August 19, 1995, in Ames, Iowa

We are the party of America's farmers, ranchers, foresters, and all who hold the earth in stewardship with the Creator. Republican leadership established the Land Grant College System under Abraham Lincoln, the National Park System under Ulysses Grant, the National Wildlife Refuge System under Teddy Roosevelt, and today's legal protections for clean air and water in more recent decades. We reaffirm our commitment to agricultural progress, environmental improvement, and the prudent development of our natural resources.

Our goal is to continue the progress we have made to achieve a cleaner, safer, healthier environment for all Americans - and to pass on to our children and grandchildren a better environment than we have today. We must recognize the unique role our States, localities, and private sector have in improving our environment. The States and communities are the laboratories of environmental innovation. Inflexible requirements hurt the environment, add unnecessary costs, and reduce technology development. While we have made substantial environmental progress, we must reject failed approaches created by fearmongering and centralized control which will not serve our environment well in the century ahead.

The Superfund program to clean up abandoned toxic waste sites is a classic case in point. More than half of the \$30 billion already spent on Superfund has gone for litigation and administration. In other words, trial lawyers have profited from the current flawed and unfair liability scheme, while toxic waste sites wait to be cleaned up. Without the opposition of Bill Clinton, we will fix the broken Superfund law. We will direct resources to clean-up sites where there are real risks, and cooperate with citizens, States, and localities who want to help, rather than harassing them with unwarranted lawsuits.

The States have been leaders in returning contaminated sites to productive use under "brownfields" programs. These programs tailor clean-up standards appropriate for expected future use, thus enabling environmental cleanup and economic development. Accordingly, as an essential component of our comprehensive Superfund reform, we will remove disincentives in current Federal law in order to allow States to expand their innovative "brownfields" programs.

Inconsistent Federal policies have created a nightmare for our Nation's ports at a critical time of growth and change in international trade. We must protect the environment while recognizing the unique situation of each port. There must be a coordination of State, local, and Federal roles in encouraging our ports to expand to meet current and future needs.

Republicans trust Americans to honor their shared desire to live and raise their children in a clean and healthy environment. For all environmental problems, we propose a common sense approach based on flexibility and consensus, that builds a better future on free enterprise, local control, sound science, and technology development. This is our positive and proactive agenda: assure that the air and water are clean and safe for our children and future generations; assure that everyone has access to public outdoor recreation areas; and that historic and environmentally significant wilderness and wetlands areas will be protected without compromising our commitment to the rights of property owners; set reasonable standards for environmental improvement that incorporate flexibility, acknowledge geographic differences, and create incentives for development of new technologies; base all government environmental decisions on the best peer-reviewed scientific evidence, while encouraging advancements in research; achieve progress, as much as possible, through incentives rather than compulsion, and improve compliance by letting States and localities play a greater role in setting and maintaining standards. Many States have enacted environmental education and "voluntary self-audit" laws to encourage people to find and correct pollution; the Congress should remove disincentives for States to achieve these goals; and assure private property owners of due process to protect their rights, and make environmental decisions in concert with those whose homes, businesses, and communities are directly affected. Our commitment to an improved environment is best embodied in the recently enacted amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. This Republican initiative will guarantee all Americans a safe and clean source of drinking water and will grant local communities the flexibility to avoid unnecessary requirements.

The Clinton Democrats disagree with our principles. They have increased spending by creating new bureaucratic programs, creating new paperwork requirements, and funding pet projects of their special interest friends. However, the Clinton Administration has failed to reduce regulatory burdens on States, localities, and individuals. It has failed to create incentives for environmental improvements or use sound science and cooperation to achieve environmental goals. Today, they are planning to impose scientifically unsupported, massive new regulations on ozone and particulates. These rules will impose new requirements on cities, add unnecessary costs, and destroy jobs without adequate justification.

Republicans support the ongoing efforts of the States and communities to ensure reliable and safe water supplies. As the Federal government moves away from its past role as a grant giver and direct lender in the development of water-related infrastructure, we will encourage the establishment of public-private partnerships to build and finance our nation's water infrastructure.

We recognize the Great Lakes encompass one-fifth of the fresh water supply of the entire world and we oppose any diversion of Great Lakes water.

Republicans have always advocated conserving our animal and plant resources, but we recognize the current Endangered Species Act is seriously flawed and, indeed, is often counterproductive because of its reliance on Federal command-and-control measures. The adherence of Clinton Democrats to these discredited ESA provisions has devastated the environment they pretend to protect by virtually encouraging landowners to remove habitat for marginal species to avoid government seizure of their property. We will improve the ESA by implementing an incentive-based program in cooperation with State, local, and tribal governments and private individuals to recognize the critical relationship between a healthy environment and a healthy economy founded on private property rights and responsibilities.

Securing Property Rights

Republicans consider private property rights the cornerstone of environmental progress. That lesson has been confirmed in the tragic environmental record of Communist rule and of socialist regimes in the less developed world. By safeguarding those rights - by enforcing the Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment and by providing compensation - we not only stand true to the Constitution but advance sound environmentalism as well. Republicans, led by Senator Dole, have spearheaded efforts in Congress to protect private property rights.

Improving Public Lands

The nation's public lands - half the territory in the West - must be administered both for today's multiple uses and for tomorrow's generations. We support multiple use conducted in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner. We will preserve priority wilderness and wetlands - real wetlands of environmental significance, not the damp grounds of a bureaucrat's imagination.

We support a thorough review of the lands owned by the federal government with a goal of transferring lands that can best be managed by State, county, or municipal governments. This review should ensure that the federal government retains ownership to unique property worthy of national oversight. Properties transferred from federal control must recognize existing property and mineral rights, including water, mining claims, grazing permits, rights of access, hunting, fishing, and contracts.

We recognize the historic use of public lands for livestock production in compliance with legal requirements. Our renewable rangeland should continue to be available under conditions that ensure both expanded production of livestock and protection of the rangeland environment. We condemn the Clinton Administration's range war against this pillar of the western economy.

We recognize the need to keep our National Park System healthy and accessible to all. Our National Parks have a backlog of more than four billion dollars in maintenance and infrastructure repair projects. The nation's natural crown jewels are losing some of their luster, tarnished by neglect and indifference. Our park system needs to be rebuilt, restructured, and reinvigorated to ensure that all Americans can enjoy and be proud of their parks.

We stand for sustainable forestry to stabilize and provide continuity for our timber industry and to improve the health of the country's public forests. This requires active management practices, such as the responsible salvage harvesting of dead and diseased trees. The Democrats' hands-off approach has made our great forests vulnerable to ravaging fires, insects, and disease.

The Democrats' policies have devastated the economy of timber-dependent communities across the Pacific Northwest and in the Tongass National Forest, the Nation's largest and most productive, to please elite special interests. We join families and communities in rural America who rely on public forests for their livelihood in calling for the federal government to carefully evaluate the socioeconomic impacts of its actions and to live up to its commitments to provide an adequate timber supply to dependent communities through sustainable forest management.

We reaffirm the traditional deference by the federal government to the States in the allocation and appropriation of water. We deplore the Clinton Administration's disregard for State primacy through attempts to preempt State law with respect to water usage and watershed protection. We also recognize the need to protect adequate supplies of water for agriculture without unreasonable government mandates.

We support the original intent of the Mining Law of 1872: to provide the certainty and land tenure necessary for miners to risk tremendous capital investment on federal lands, thus preserving jobs - indeed, whole industries - and bolstering our domestic economy. We support appropriate changes to the law to ensure the taxpayer will receive a reasonable return for the value of extracted minerals. We oppose extremist attempts to shut down American mining in favor of our international competitors.

Power for Progress

Our goal is an energy supply available to all - competitively priced, secure, and clean - produced by healthy industries operating in an environmentally responsible manner using domestically available resources to the greatest extent practicable.

No one should take that for granted. Today's energy boom was hard won by Republican reforms in the 1980s, ending more than three decades of ruinous Federal meddling that drove up prices and drove down supplies. Now that progress is under attack from the same quarters that brought us energy crises, gas rationing, and dangerous dependence on unreliable supplies of foreign oil. That dependency is 50 percent today, and will be two-thirds in only a few short years.

It does not have to be this way. The Clinton Administration has learned nothing from the collapse of liberalism. It clings to outdated regulation that stifles production and drives up consumer prices. Clinton proposed a punishing BTU energy tax that would have penalized consumers and cost thousands of jobs. After Republicans derailed that bad idea, Bill Clinton championed - and congressional Democrats approved - a 4.7-cent per gallon gas tax hike, not to improve roads and bridges, but for general spending.

Now the Clinton Administration demands lighter cars and family trucks to meet its Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) goals, at the cost of thousands of lives lost every year in auto accidents - not to mention the cost in jobs lost to foreign auto makers.

Nowhere has the failure of presidential leadership been more apparent than in Clinton's position on finding a reasonable long-term solution to our Nation's nuclear waste disposal problem. We support the federal government's obligation under contract to take possession of nuclear waste and remove it from temporary storage in over 30 states across the country. At the same time, we believe that the siting and licensing of both permanent and interim storage facilities should be based on sound science and not solely upon political expediency.

The Clinton approach hobbles the nation's progress. Our program of energy renewal, on the other hand, is an essential component of broader opportunity for all. We must finish the job of preparing America's energy capacity to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Today, Republican Governors and the States are leading the way to true and meaningful electric utility industry deregulation and competition and lower rates for all consumers. Restructuring the electric utility industry presents both great opportunities and challenges for our Nation. We support greater competition as we move toward a market-based approach, with true and meaningful deregulation, after an appropriate and fair transition period that allows for competitive retail markets while ensuring reliability of service in a cost-effective manner for all consumers.

We support elimination of the Department of Energy to emphasize the need for greater privatization and to reduce the size of the federal government. The Department of Energy's defense concerns should be transferred to an independent agency under the Defense Department. Other necessary programs should be farmed out to other departments and offices.

We support environmentally responsible energy extraction from public and private lands. We will not tolerate poor reclamation or pollution from mining or drilling. We advocate environmentally sound oil production in the largest known onshore or offshore petroleum reserve in the Nation - the small coastal plain portion of the 19-million acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Oil produced there, traveling through an existing pipeline, will bring billions of dollars in revenues to reduce the federal budget deficit. On the other hand, without ANWR coastal plain development, we will lose hundreds of thousands of potential jobs and untold billions of American dollars will be paid to foreign governments for the oil not produced from our home reserves.

We continue to support and encourage the development of our domestic natural gas industry. Natural gas is a clean, abundant, and domestically available resource, which can be provided, transported, and consumed in an environmentally responsible manner.

We will delegate management and collection of federal oil and gas royalties to the States, thereby increasing receipts both to the States and to the federal Treasury. This action will reduce bureaucratic involvement and administrative costs to the federal government. We urge the federal government to expedite and streamline the exploration, leasing, and permitting process for the domestic oil and gas industry.

The coal industry now supplies more than half of all electric generation and is vital for our entire economy. We encourage research for cleaner coal combustion technologies and will require that

objective, peer-reviewed science be the basis for environmental decisions that increase costs for electric rate payers.

Because no single source of energy can reliably supply the needs of the American people, we believe in fostering alternative and renewable energy sources to assist in reducing dependence on unreliable foreign oil supplies. We anticipate the continuing development of energy from coal, oil, natural gas, agricultural products such as ethanol and biodiesel, nuclear, and hydro sources and where economically competitive, from wind, solar, and geothermal power.

The United States should continue its commitment to addressing global climate change in a prudent and effective manner that does not punish the U.S. economy. Despite scientific uncertainty about the role of human activity in climate change, the Clinton Administration has leapfrogged over reasoned scientific inquiry and now favors misdirected measures, such as binding targets and timetables, imposed only on the United States and certain other developed countries, to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Republicans deplore the arbitrary and premature abandonment of the previous policy of voluntary reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. We further deplore ceding U.S. sovereignty on environmental issues to international bureaucrats and our foreign economic competitors.

Energy policy and transportation policy go hand in hand. To prepare the National Highway System and the National Aviation System for the 21st Century, we will maintain the integrity of the Federal transportation trust funds and respect the call by Republican governors to ensure those funds are returned to the States with a minimum of federal red tape. Trusting the people, congressional Republicans passed the National Highway System Designation Act of 1995, returning to the States decisions about highway safety. We support reasonable speed limits, reflecting local needs and geography, and prudent personal safety measures, but we oppose Washington's one-size-fits-all approach to the mobility of the American people.

Agriculture in the 21st Century

The moral strength abundant on America's farms and rural communities has been the foundation and source of strength for our Nation since its earliest days. America's settlers built their farming communities on values like faith, hard work, dedication, and self-sacrifice.

Republicans see a very bright future for agriculture and rural America. Our program to strengthen rural America will benefit every sector of the economy and every part of the Nation. First and foremost, we will reduce the tax burden - both the estate tax and the capital gains levy - on those who produce America's food and fiber. This is essential to preserve production agriculture. Just like urban small businesses, rural producers need full deductibility of health insurance premiums and an overall tax structure that is simpler and fairer.

Deficit spending by government is death by strangulation for agriculture. Our farms are major users of capital, with over \$150 billion in current borrowing. Interest payments are one of their heaviest burdens. The Republican balanced budget of last year, vetoed by Bill Clinton, would have saved farmers more than \$15 billion in interest costs by the year 2002. We stand with the American farmer in demanding an end to the spending excesses in official Washington.

The elections of 1994 were a resounding victory for American agriculture. The first Republican majorities in both the House and Senate in 40 years won an historic breakthrough with the "Freedom to Farm" act. For the first time in six decades, Federal policy will allow individual farmers to grow what makes sense on their own land, not what a bureaucrat wants grown there. "Freedom to Farm" will permit them to respond to world trade opportunities for value-added exports that bring new jobs and broader prosperity to rural America.

Moreover, the Republican "Freedom to Farm" act is the most pro-environment farm bill ever. By liberating high-tech, high-yield U.S. agriculture to pursue ever greater levels of efficiency, it will enable growers to produce more from less land, saving wildlife habitat and fragile soils from the plow. The new law allows farmers to rotate crops, thereby reducing use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer. It continues the Conservation and Wetland Reserve Programs and creates a new Environmental Quality Incentive Program to help farmers do what they do best - conserve the land and pass it on, enriched and enhanced, to future generations.

While promising to modernize farm programs, the Clinton Administration instead advanced failed "New Deal" policies. Throughout the ensuing debate, they fought every effort by Congress to get the hand of government out of agriculture. Finally, having agreed to "Freedom to Farm," Bill Clinton is threatening to repeal this historic legislation, undercutting long-term planning by farmers across the country.

In contrast, "Freedom to Farm" ends the command-and-control policies that have choked the entrepreneurial spirit of rural America. "Freedom to Farm" permits experimentation with new crops and new markets, just in time to meet an explosion in worldwide demand for food, fiber, fuels and industrial products. We reaffirm our historical and continuing support for the expanded use of biodiesel and ethanol to improve the rural economy and reduce our dependence on imported oil.

Experts predict the need for U.S. producers to triple their output over the next 40 years.

"Freedom to Farm" positions them to meet the challenge of feeding a hungry and troubled world.

While "Freedom to Farm" greatly reduced USDA paperwork imposed on farmers, much remains to be done to reduce the regulations that add about \$6,000 per farm per year to the cost of farming. Our extensive program of regulatory reform is explained elsewhere in this platform.

Republicans worked hard for and applaud the repeal of the Delaney Clause and the reform of food safety laws. These changes allow a responsible approach toward crop production and ensure the quality of the Nation's food supply, with special protections for our children.

We reaffirm the Republican Party's historic commitment to agricultural progress through research and education, starting with the system of land grant colleges established in 1862. For the new century, as in the days of Lincoln, farming must look ahead to innovation and constant improvement, especially biotechnology and precision farming techniques.

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